

To: Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Katherine Verano

Safe Futures

Date: March 17, 2014

RE: R.B. SB 462: AAC Civil Restraining and Protective Orders

Good afternoon, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Katherine Verano and I am here to speak about Raised Bill SB 462, An Act Concerning Civil Restraining and Protective Orders. I am asking your support of sections 2 and 4-6 which speaks of increasing penalties for violating orders.

I am employed as a Family Violence Victim Advocate Supervisor at Safe Futures. I oversee advocates in the New London and Norwich courts as well as in the Norwich Police Department. Over the past several years I have listened to victims concerns, fears and frustration when their abusers violate protective orders by committing threatening and harassing behaviors only to face minimal consequences.

There is one particular case I would like you to know about. The case is of a defendant who was charged with a criminal domestic violence offense to include a threatening charge. The victim reported that the defendant had a history of physical abuse and threatened to kill her if she called the police. A no contact protective order was issued in court.

Within days, the defendant violated the no contact order by going to the victim's residence. The defendant was arrested, arraigned in court and released. The defendant violated the order again by leaving threatening telephone messages at the victim's home and work. The defendant was arrested for violating the order. The victim reported the defendant was driving by her house and stalking her. The police witnessed this and made an arrest for violating the order.

A plea offer was made for a split sentence to include 6 months in jail and probation. A Standing Criminal Protective Order (SCPO) was issued with conditions of No Contact.

When the defendant was released from jail he violated the Standing Criminal Order by threatening the victim and was arrested. Over a five year period this happened numerous times. The victim cooperated with prosecution. Again, a split sentence with minimal jail time was ordered.

As an advocate, it is our practice to safety plan with victims to prepare for any scenarios. I cannot express the fear and anxiety felt by this victim who had to change her employment, change telephone numbers, install an alarm system, have family members move in for protection and take other measures to protect herself. Not to mention lost wages for court dates and testimony as well as counseling services. By increasing the penalty from a Class D to a Class C felony punishable by up to 10 years in jail will allow victims to gain some stability and hope in their lives.